

Brampton and District 50+ Forum

Report of the meeting held on Tuesday 18 March 2008 in Brampton Community Centre.

22 members were present for lunch; about 30 number attended the meeting.

In the absence of Maureen Granville Ann Oswin took the Chair and after welcoming the members and guest speakers gave news and updates:

- Several local Post Offices, including those at Irthington, Castle Carrock and Hallbankgate, are to be closed.
- Thursday 20 March. Healthy communities day at Tullie House, 9:30 - 13:00; buffet lunch included. Some places are available. City councillors, members of the PCT and others will discuss local projects.
- Sunday 6 April. A day of dance at Brampton Community Centre.
- Help the Aged: 'Dignity in care', a conference held in Manchester. Ann has a report which includes an individual's personal view. The NHS spends 45% of its budget on the elderly.
- Cost of travel to health appointments. Revised guidelines about reimbursement are to be published in April. Ann will obtain details.
- 'Closer to Home'. The consultation process is now finished.
- Help the Aged: 'uneven pavements campaign'. Forms are available.
- NW Forums: AGM on 26 March in Preston. The Brampton 50+ Forum belongs to this organisation and our members are invited to attend this AGM. Travel expenses will be reimbursed. Anyone interested in attending should contact Ann.
- Winter Fuel Allowance. The deadline for applications for this year's allowance is 31 March. Members' comments at this point suggested that letters from the Pension Service should be simpler.

The first guest speaker, Peter Woodhouse, is leading the process looking at Cumbria Care Residential Homes. Copies of the booklet, 'Proposals for the replacement of six residential care homes in Cumbria', were distributed. Cumbria owns 33 care homes providing a high standard of care; CSCI (the inspecting body), residents and families like them. Mr Woodhouse explained that the facilities and room sizes of the care homes are out of date, do not meet modern standards and do not allow for the degree of privacy and dignity expected today. He described some of the difficulties encountered because rooms are too small and explained why replacing the homes was a better option than trying to adapt the current buildings. Cumbria County Council decided in December 2006 that doing nothing was not an option and the proposals are part of the planning and consultation process. Six new dual residences (residential and nursing) have been proposed, including one in Brampton, and it was hoped that these could be linked with other facilities on the same site, e.g. a surgery, chiropody, hairdressing, and possibly extra care housing. The decision is likely to be made later this year. Then each area would have a local focus group. The planning process would take about 18 months; building 18 months. An organisation, 'Shaping our lives', exists to consult residents and others for their views. Forum members were encouraged to make their views known either by writing a letter or email or by completing the questionnaire. The deadline is 29 April 2008.

In the discussion and questions which followed several issues were raised including: moving between rooms within the same site as personal needs change; staffing and the need to provide local housing for staff; staffing shortages for provision of intermediate care; costs of residential and nursing care; having intermediate care, extra care housing and residential/nursing care all available locally; meals on wheels cuts; 'sure-start +' for older people and partnerships with charities such as Age Concern.

Mr Woodhouse described how the 'cheese wedge' model might overcome some of the difficulties in zoning provision of intermediate care in rural areas.

Our second speaker, Pam Beswick, explained the role of 'Signposts' in trying to link people, especially those whose don't like or are unable to come to meetings, with organisations so that their views are voiced. She encouraged Forum members to attend regional meetings which have more clout. Funding is available.

- Janet Blakeman described the free help she had received from Cumbria Fire Service in fitting smoke alarms and checking fire safety. Call Kevin Timmons (016977 423666 or 077 611 08437).
- Jean Taylor gave details of a lady in Penrith willing to give free advice on tax matters (08456013321).
- Leonard James drew attention to the changes to conditions of use of the NoW travel card from 1st April and the difficulties that this might cause.

The meeting ended with tea and biscuits.

The next 50+ Forum meeting, the Annual General Meeting, is on Tuesday 20 May 2008.

Any members who feel they would like to be part of the committee should let Maureen or Ann know before the AGM.